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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Letter dated 29 September 2000 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Yesterday, 28 September 2000, a member of the Israeli parliament and the leader of the Likud Party, Mr. Ariel Sharon, led a group in a dangerous and provocative visit to Al-Haram Al-Sharif in Occupied East Jerusalem. The purpose of this visit, according to Mr. Sharon, was to emphasize illegal Israeli sovereignty over the place. Hundreds of members of the Israeli security forces accompanied Mr. Sharon, which further aggravated tensions, leading to clashes between Palestinian civilians and Israeli security forces, both in Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the rest of East Jerusalem.

Today, 29 September 2000, and following Friday worship, Israeli security forces stormed Al-Haram Al-Sharif using rubber bullets and live ammunition against the worshippers, killing five Palestinian civilians and injuring about 200 others. An Israeli police chief admitted that snipers were also deployed and that they fired live rounds, making the death of civilians the result of wilful killing. Clashes and further Israeli repression against Palestinian civilians later spread to other places including the rest of East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Gaza.

The actions today of the Israeli security forces are starkly reminiscent of those committed on 8 October 1990, when those forces stormed Al-Haram Al-Sharif, killing 20 civilians and injuring more than 150. At the time, the Security Council, in its resolution 672 (1990) of 12 October 1990, condemned the acts of violence by the Israeli security forces and called upon "Israel, the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12

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August 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967".

The international community, and particularly the Security Council, must reiterate such a position and compel the occupying Power to respect its obligations. The need for the cessation of such appalling actions is even greater at this sensitive time, given their detrimental effect on the Middle East peace process and the efforts to achieve a final settlement between the two sides. At this point, ensuring the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the rest of East Jerusalem and from the vicinity of other Palestinian cities is a necessary first step for salvaging the situation.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 40, 41 and 85, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dr. Nasser **Al-Kidwa**
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